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**TITLE:** THE SACRAMENT OF INITIATION IN THE  
LIGHT OF THE ABAGISU MALE INITIATION TO  
ADULTHOOD

**AUTHOR:** SSEMWEZI, PETER, IMC

**TUTOR:** REV. FR. RONZANI, RINALDO, MCCJ



SSE

1996

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**TUTOR: REV. FR. RONZANI, RINALDO, MCCJ**

**Long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for  
Bachelor of Arts, Religious studies**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 22TH, 1996.**

**NAIROBI**

## **STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the material used here has not been submitted for Academic Credit to any other Institution: All sources have been cited in full.

Signed *S. M. S. P.*.....

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I wish to restrict myself to the basic facts of the male traditional initiation rites among the Abagisu culture, comparing them with the Christian initiation of adults. I do not intend to exhaust all the arguments connected with the steps and methods used in both initiations.

My hope is that this study may help in some way to foster the process of "inculturation" of evangelization to the local culture and to bring about a clear understanding of the sacraments of initiation among the people, so that Christian teaching may be presented in the way readily understandable to the Abagisu people and thus have greater impact on their lives and on their society.

In order to write this paper I have interviewed various people: the elders, my peer group, and some who have already undergone through the initiation who belong to the Abagisu tribe. I have also interviewed the Church leaders; some Catechists, and priests. Reading some books in particular those concerning with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults have allowed me to write this essay.

With regard to the content of the paper the topic unfolds within three chapters: the first chapter is on the Abagisu male initiation to Adulthood. I have analyzed the stages that they have to pass through before and immediately after the initiation.

The second chapter will attempt to study the initiation of Adults in the Catholic Church. It includes the Rites, the periods, the celebrations of the sacraments and post baptismal catechises.

The third chapter will be devoted to the study of the theological reflections on the three sacraments, the current procedures used in the instructions of the catechumens in some Parishes of Tororo Diocese. The personal suggestions to the Church and tribal leaders.

The conclusion will present a synthesis of biblical, liturgical and theological reflections which seem to be important background for a better understanding of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

This essay, even though it is not an exhaustive treatment on the chosen topic, has helped me to understand the profound biblical, liturgical, theological and pastoral richness of the Rites of the Christian Initiation of Adults and to realise that there is still very much to be studied, unfolded and to put into practice.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INITIATION AMONG THE MALE ABAGISU TRIBE TO ADULTHOOD**

In this Chapter, we are going to reflect on the initiation among the Abagisu. In particular I will analyse the Abagisu rituals of male initiation to adulthood. My analysis is based on my experience since I grew up in their kingdom and on the oral interviews with the elders, and my peer groups.

Gisu tribe is one of the many tribes in Uganda. It occupies the Eastern part of Uganda and it is well famous as the owner of mount Elgon (Masaba). Within the tribe, there are also clans and every clan has a role to play in the tribe.

### **1.1. THE CONCEPT OF INITIATION IN THE ABAGISU TRIBE**

For them initiation is a life-long process by which the individuals are admitted to a new status within the clan. Not only in the clan but also in the tribe. It is a process which marks a change in life of the individuals. They have a belief that initiation is a blessing from God, the Supreme Being, through the ancestors to the family, the clan and the tribe. The actual process of life among the Bagisu is marked by rituals namely, the birth, naming, circumcision, burial and customs after death. A transition in the individual is a change in the whole group because those who are ahead will move a step further in their life. So to say initiation is a process of formation in which individuals are moulded and incorporated into new status.

For them circumcision is a mark which ends the childhood stage to adulthood it is a transition which is done ceremoniously. Before circumcision the individual (Umusinde) has to have a dialogue with his parents (Basaali) for the circumcision. Some individuals do not initiate the dialogue may be because of fear of the knife

(kubana). So when the age for the circumcision is ripe the parent might initiate the dialogue. They have a belief that every male person has to be circumcised in order to be called a man ( umusani). It is done between the age of 15 - 18. There is no way that the parents can refuse the request because it is a thing which must be done in their culture. <sup>1</sup>

There are four stages the individual have to pass through before initiation:

- Remote stage
- Marginal stage
- Immediate stage
- Seclusion

They are marked by rites. If it is time for rites the entire community is involved to encourage the individual for the new life. These stages are geared towards the incorporation of the new members into the clan as adults with responsibilities in the community. <sup>2</sup>

The circumcision in the Bagisu tribe occurs only in the even years. The reason being that the odd year is a year without blessings. Before initiation the male person cannot actively participate in the clan or tribal affairs. He is not responsible for anything in the clan or tribe. He is also not considered to be a person in a clan.

## **1.2. STAGES IN THE ABAGISU MALE INITIATION TO ADULTHOOD**

### ***1.2.1. The Remote Stage***

This is the first stage of initiation to adulthood. The individual asks his parents to be initiated. At this stage the individual or the candidate is called Umusinde thus he is considered to be a child or a boy. This Umusinde is a person grown within the society and has seen what is going on other male people who have passed through the stages. He has seen most of the rituals of initiation though he has not participated in them fully. He has shared, discovered with friends, peer, relatives and elders many things about the initiation process. Such sharing and discussions give

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Waycya Kidudu, an elder in Mbale Town, 26th June 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mutigomba Fred in Mbale Town, 26th June 1995.

him the courage to face this important step. In this case a candidate is a person who requests to be accepted for initiation by his parents, more especially the father, as representatives of the living and at the sometime the living dead. If he is accepted he becomes a real candidate for initiation.

There are agents who are either brothers, friends, or parents (abakwasi) who have passed through this process of initiation. They have big roles to play like encouraging the candidate. The parents play a role on behalf of the clan they are the ones to whom the new revealed to first. They are the sponsors of the entire process of initiation. At times they are in on-going formation within the entire community. The elders also play a role of welcoming a candidate to their group, they also take time to answer and advise the candidate things he should know as a mature person in the community. The questions being asked by the candidates are answered by the elders in form of stories which challenge and stimulate his desire to be initiated. The community is informed to receive the candidate in their homes and bless them, encourage them and give him some presents before the initiation.<sup>3</sup>

### ***1.2.2. The Marginal Stage***

The candidate who have shown maturity and asks to be initiated is still called Umusinde (uncircumcised) because his strong intentions will be tested and proved during the circumcision rite. He is ready to be formed by the adult community so that he develops attitudes and values that correspond to his new status in the community. *Here the candidate is given by his father the costumes (bikwaro byembalu) of those to be circumcised.* The costumes include cow-bells(Bitsentse), whistles (zifirimbi), crown (indubisi). The costumes distinguish them from other people dancing with him(bashinizi) while visiting friends and relatives. They symbolize his determination, readiness and courage to undergo initiation.

The main agent of this period and of the process of initiation to adulthood is the community. Its role is to support, accompany and motivate the candidates throughout the process of initiation. It is directly and actively involved in the formation of the candidate.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Wangalwa Christopher, whose seven sons are already circumcised 27th June 1995.

In the community there are drummers who go with the candidate while he visits his relatives and friends. His sisters who accompany him all the way and an elder who plays the role of introducing him to the people and announcing the date for circumcision.

The purpose of going around playing the cow-bells and dancing is to present himself to his relatives and friends for approval, affirmation and invitation for the circumcision rite. This period presupposes that the candidate before reaching the initiation day had already asked questions and received answers, heard stories and legends to help him changing his life to adulthood. The people visited play the role of encouraging the candidate to face the knife.<sup>4</sup>

The rite of brewing beer<sup>5</sup> is the second rite in the preparation before the first major rite of the Abagisu initiation to adulthood. The rite of brewing beer marks the end of the preparation period and the beginning of the immediate preparation. The same rite marks a transition from one who has been establishing mature relationships to one who is ready to prove his maturity, determination and commitment in circumcision.

Three days before circumcision, the candidate when naked, is accompanied by an elder early in the morning to a near by river where take a bath. It is a sign that they are cleansed of all things they have been having, they are now pure are free from them. They come-back while running in order not to meet anybody on the way especially a female person. They normally avoid to use roads and use paths instead so as to avoid meeting people. The candidate is smeared with the fermented millet (busera) while putting on shorts and his sisters are also smeared and he continues to go around while visiting relatives and friends. The next day is smeared more and he wears only shorts without a shirt.<sup>6</sup>

### ***1.2.3. The Immediate Stage***

This is a stage when the candidate has already encountered most of his relatives and friends and had shown his commitment to be initiated. The community

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Wadada Godfrey, a candidate for 1996, in Mbale Town, 4th July 1995.

<sup>5</sup> The beer is called Amalwa, the ingredients are water and grinded millet when farmented for seven days and water make it a real beer which used up to the day of initiation.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with one of the circumciser 4th July 1995

have authorized him to pursue the last preparations for circumcision. Here everybody in the community is an agent even if a person is only encouraging him he is taken to be an agent. The candidate starts to receive blessings (khubita) from those who had already been circumcised especially the elders. He never gets blessings from female people not even from his mother. The blessings of the grand parents are so important probably this is the time when the candidate gets scared so those who are accompanying him wherever he is going have to carry swords, pangas and sticks to make him aware that he should not be scared and if he runs away they are to kill him.

The initiation process to adulthood is centred on the circumcision rite. In this rite the fore-skin of the candidate which attaches him to childhood is severed from his penis, thus marking a new birth in the adult community. It is the grandfather or his father who leads the candidate to the courtyard (lulyanyi). It is the place where the circumcision takes place, the place is surrounded by elders and strong men all carrying big sticks and swords to encourage the candidate and to endure the pain of the knife. Only the elders and the circumcised people are to watch while shouting while the candidate is proving his bravery, patience and perseverance. In case of fear it is a shame to the family and community.<sup>7</sup>

The separation of the foreskin by the circumciser (Umushebi) and umunutsi (one who helps the umushebi) is an external sign that symbolizes the separation from childhood and brings the person into the seclusion period.

Mbiti writes that:

*"The cutting of the foreskin is parallel to the cutting of the umbilical cord when the child is born. The sexual organ (foreskin) attaches the child (person) to the state of ignorance, the state of inactivity and the state of potential importance (sexuality). But once that link is severed, the young person is freed from that state of ignorance and inactivity. He is born in another state which is the state of knowledge, of activity, of production."*<sup>8</sup>

The shading of blood is the relinquishing of childish behaviour and beginning of a new life, a new birth to adult life. While shading blood, there is jubilation, dancing, drumming in praise of the newly circumcised person who is

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Nabuholo, the newly circumcised person, 10th July 1995.

<sup>8</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969, 123.

termed as Omusani. In case that he has been courageous and strong, this is the time he is receiving gifts from the community. These gifts are his properties to start a new life and in the long run, he is ready to marry. The newly circumcised is taken to the special place, the seclusion house (likombe). This is the house where the omusani sleeps, it is taken to be the residence of the newly circumcised for the rest of the seclusion period into this house no female is allowed to enter due to the fact that the omusani might feel desire of having sexual intercourse then gets a lot of pain on the wounded penis.

#### *1.2.4. The Seclusion Stage*

The Omusani is now possessing the name for maturity. He is in transition stage that is he is neither a boy nor an adult. The elders appear again in his house purposely to tell him the secrets of the clan and of the tribe. They are also telling him all the responsibilities that he has to take being a mature person.

The agents at this period are the initiated male adults and some male guardians. Within this time the omusani is not to eat meat because the fat of the meat prevents quick healing of the wound. He is to eat boiled vegetables and eggs. The Father and the grandfather come to the seclusion house to bless the omusani and wish him a happy life in the adulthood.<sup>9</sup>

The passing out feast (umukebu) is the last rite in the process of initiation to adulthood. It marks the end of all of basic formation and the beginning of on-going formation through practical participation in the life of the community. It is mostly done by the elder of the village. This is a feast of drinking and eating when the person is completely healed. This feast normally is taken to be a thanks giving by the new person to all who contributed to his transition from childhood to his transition to adulthood. So he is free to marry to participate actively during all the traditional ceremonies in the clan, tribe and in the community in which belongs to.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mabinda Jacob, the elder on 10th July 1995.

### 1.3. CONCLUSION

Initiation being part and parcel of the male people among the Abagisu, every male has to be initiated person that is he has to be called mukwasi (circumcised person). The one who escapes the initiation because of different circumstances (umusinde) is ever not at ease with others especially the peer groups because of abusing him - being rude and neglecting him. In such a case that un-circumcised person suffers physically, psychologically and socially. If he gets a desire and gradually change that is to be initiated, he changes from the old life to new life whereby he feels that he is recognized and respected by the tribal members. He is no longer called Umusinde but umusani he is no longer disturbed physically, socially and psychologically and he is free to participate in the activity in all celebrations that are occurring in the clan and in the tribe at large. He becomes a man of responsibilities in his culture even consultations can be done to him. He becomes a model especially to the younger ones who are not yet initiated in respecting their customs and rituals being carried out.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In this chapter we wish to reflect on the Christian Concept of Initiation. There are some relevant aspects that are found in the Christian initiation as they are practiced today in Catholic Church. The analysis of this aspect will be based on the "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults" (RCIA).

#### 2.1. THE CONCEPT OF INITIATION AMONG CATHOLICS

In the Christian understanding, the term initiation refers to the official process of receiving those who have desired, interested and acceptable people into the universal Church which is the body of Christ. This long process is usually preceded by the presence of faith and need for conversion. That is to cross the bridge from the sin of Adam to Christ. Those to be initiated have to be confronted with the Gospel message as proclaimed, witnessed and put into practice by the Church members under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This normally takes place at an early stage even before one takes any step leading in the direction of the Church. This is a grace of God which awakens in the people who desire to become followers of Christ. It is taken to be a gift of love offered by God to all human beings.

Christian initiation begins when an adult person freely requests to be accepted and received into the Christian community through the Sacraments of Initiation, that is Baptism, Confirmation and the first Eucharist.<sup>1</sup>

This action of requesting proves that the person has made a mature and free decision of what he/she wants to be. After the acceptance, the preparation that follows

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Lewinski, Welcoming The New Catholic, Revised Edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1983). 8.

creates an anxiety of achievement which is a sign of growth for the individual and the community.

Christian initiation is a journey towards the Kingdom that Christ preached and brought about and where He is waiting for all of us. It is a journey in which those who pursue it are gradually enriched and thus converted heart and mind, and join the community of fellow travellers. It is a journey like that of travellers who face different circumstances which help them to change their world view and attitudes towards life. The distance covered is marked by some stages along the road, whereby the travellers for the first time are congratulated, refreshed and prepared to proceed to the next stage with the help of their supporters (RCIA, 75). The journey that one makes first is a journeying, supporting one another in living Christian life. Therefore the journey to the community of Christ is divided into four parts namely;

1. Evangelization and Precatechumenate
2. Catechumenate
3. Purification and Enlightenment
4. Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

These parts are divided by steps and distinctly mark the conversion or change attained on the journey.

The steps are:

- Acceptance into the order of Catechumens
- Election or Enrollment of names
- Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

(RCIA, 6-7)

These steps leads to the period of inquiry and growth. We are going to analyze briefly each part of the journey and each step so as to understand the meaning of the entire journey. The focus will be on the travellers, the ministers and the content of initiation. The journey of Christian initiation is geared towards the Paschal celebration when the initiates are fully joined to Christ through whom they receive the Spirit which makes them God's people as they share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

## 2.2. THE ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

### 2.2.1. *Period of Evangelization or Precatechumanate*

This part of the journey is called evangelization. This is the period when those who are evangelizing and witnessing the Gospel message are rewarded by the people who desire to know more about Christian life by asking questions. Those asking questions are the inquirers whom the word of God has touched and having their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit. They are the people who intend to know more about the living God and come to love and live in Him. They are adults who have had a certain type of experience in life. They are the people hearing the word of God for the first time or have been members of non-Catholic Church or non-Christians. Some may be baptised in other Christian denominations and others had received no Baptism yet.

The Agents in this case are those who are already fully initiated in the Church. Those who finished the journey of initiation help others to take the same journey. They play a role of establishing trust and communication with the inquirers, of evangelizing the seekers by proclaiming the living God...Jesus Christ, whom He sent for the salvation of all.<sup>2</sup>

The sponsor is the Christian community in which the inquirers live, the community is to invite the inquirers to any activity of the Church let it be in the Small Christian Community or Prayer meetings so as to see how they will participate actively after being initiated.

Among the agents there are Catechists and Priests also to whom the inquirers feel free to ask any question concerning the mission that they are soon starting. The Priests and the Catechists work hand in hand to welcome the newcomers, to assist them in reflecting on the Holy Scriptures and to introduce them to the community which usually gather together on Sundays. Not only that but the Priest administers the Liturgical celebration, Sacraments and Apostolate.

In the content of formation, there are always "dialogues" between the agents and the inquirers, more especially the Catechists and the Priests. In the dialogues they may use stories connected to the Bible and some figures of the Church so as to make the inquirers understand the struggle against sin. Through the experience of the agents

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<sup>2</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, The Shape of Baptism: The Right of Christian Initiation, 1978, 129.

the inquirers can discover their needs of relating to God through Jesus and who also maintain their relationship to God as taught by the Church.

The objective of the evangelization is to bring the inquirers to the initial conversion by giving them chance to reflect on their deeper aspirations, to discover Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Also to experience some kind of relationship with God and with the ecclesial community.<sup>3</sup> This is a reception and if it is to take place is to be carried out without any ritual celebration. The reception is to be adopted to the local conditions as well as pastoral situation especially that of Small Christian Community.

Although the rite of initiation begins with the admission to the Catechumanate, the preceding period of pre-catechumanate is of great importance. It is a time of evangelization. From it, comes faith and initial conversion. ( RCIA,40)

### **2.2.1.1. The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens**

The rite of becoming a catechumen is to take place and is of great importance. Assembling publicly for the first time the candidates make their own intention known to the Church (RCIA,41). The catechumanate is an extended period during which the candidates are given pastoral formation and are trained the practice of self-discipline, in this way, the dispositions manifested at the entrance rite into the catechumanate are brought to maturity. Three ways are suggested in order to welcome the Inquirers;

- a- A Fitting Formation
- b- The Liturgy of the Word
- c- The Dismissal of the Catechumens

#### *a- A Fitting Formation*

Given by the Priest (Deacon), Catechist and other lay people in the stages and presented integrally. In this case the inquirers become Catechumens or Candidates. The Baptised non-catholics are called candidates for full communion and the baptised Catholics are candidates for completion of Initiation. Familiarisation with living the Christian way of life. Helped by the example and support of sponsors and God parents and the whole community, the catechumens will learn to pray more easily, to witness

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 3 Michel Dujaric, The Rite of Christian Initiation: Historical and Pastoral Reflections, 1989, 25.

to the faith, to be constant in the expectation of Christ in all things. To follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds and to exercise charity towards neighbours to the point of self-renunciation.

#### *b- The Liturgy of the Word*

This is a suitable liturgical experience, by these liturgical rites, the Church helps the catechumens on their journey. The readings are of that Sunday on which the Rite is celebrated. However, the suggested readings can also be used ( RCIA,62).

After the homily there is a dialogue between the Priest (or Deacon) and the candidates. So the candidates should affirm their readiness to accept the Gospel as a way of life before the text of the Gospel is presented to them. This presentation of the Gospel symbolizes its importance as a base of the Christian life.

#### *c- The Dismissal of the Catechumens*

The candidates, sponsors and Catechist are blessed (RCIA, 67). So the catechumens and the Catechist leave the Assembly so that they may reflect upon the word of God on their own under the guidance of the Catechist while the faithful celebrate the Eucharist. This dismissal marks the difference between the fully-initiated and those not yet so. By doing this both groups will be encouraged to be faithful on their respective journey.<sup>4</sup>

### ***2.2.2. The Period of the Catechumenate (RCIA, 75-103)***

At this time, the candidates must have decided to embark on the journey of faith in the catholic community of believers. It is the time that they are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life. In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity.

<sup>4</sup> The dismissal is found in the Christian Initiation at the same time it is found in the Abagisu Tribe. The uncircumcised person is not allowed to drink and eat with his father and other elders, even his peer group may be abusing his so in the long run he may not socialize with them.

Kavanagh says that.

"What is to be discerned in the catechumen during this period is not so much intellectual adequacy regarding concepts having to do with faith, but maturation in those dispositions towards the faith that were already manifest when the individual was admitted to the catechumenate. The maturation process is to be actively helped by the whole local church."<sup>5</sup>

The agents are the Presbyters, Deacons, Catechists and the local Christian community. Among them the Catechists and the sponsors play a big role. The Catechist performs specific duties and services in the name of the Church especially in the formation of an authentic local church. The sponsors are to be close to the catechumens as adult Christians, witness to the Lord and represent the community.

Within this period, the Rite introduces other ministers who take over from the sponsors, these are called the godparent. They are normally chosen by the catechumens and they may be related to them. The agents mentioned to do the work well need formation in order to help those who are journeying to Lord.

In the formation, doctrinal formation is to be given by the pastoral agents. It is important for the catechumens to attain a suitable knowledge of dogmas and precepts and an intimate understanding of the mystery of salvation.<sup>6</sup> This formation is suitable when it is accommodated to the liturgical year and enriched by seasonal celebration of the word.

The catechumens are to be formed by living closely with others who have the experiences of Christian way of life. The agents are to show good examples to the catechumens because faith is paramount in this mode of formation. They run to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ.

The Church like the mother help the catechumens on their journey by means of suitable liturgical rites. They are to participate in public worship or in case of celebrating the liturgy of the word (RCIA, 81) every Sunday, however when they are present in the assembly of the faithful they are to be dismissed in a friendly manner before the Eucharist celebration (RCIA,75). For they must await their baptism, which will join them to God's Priestly people and empower them to participate in the Christ's

<sup>5</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, The Shape of Baptism... 131.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 131

new worship. The dismissal of Catechumens after the prayer over them before the prayer of the faithful and preparation of the gifts may in addition serve as an effective nonverbal catechesis for the faithful themselves on the awesome dignity of their own baptism.<sup>7</sup> The right of blessings (RCIA, 95-99) and the other remaining rites are also called transitory rites of the catechumenate as they mark the steady growth on the journey of faith and conversion. Because of the ministry in the church, these rites are celebrated by either a Priest or a Deacon. The sponsors join the celebrant in laying their hands upon the catechumens while the other Christians stretch hands over the catechumens. This is a symbolic gesture of the participation of the entire membership of the Christian community involved in the formation of these Catechumens.

The anointing of the catechumens (RCIA, 98-102). This rite of anointing through the use of the oil of catechumens may be celebrated whenever it seems beneficial. The oil strengthens the catechumens in their intentions and heals their worries. Through the oil, God grants the catechumens His wisdom to understand the Gospel more deeply and to accept the challenges that they are to encounter in their Christian life.

The minor exorcisms are prayers in the form of petitions directly addressed to God. These prayers acknowledge the darkness or void of sin, calling upon the very presence of God to breath life where there is only death.<sup>8</sup> They draw attention of the catechumens to the real nature of Christian life, the struggle between flesh and spirit. the importance of self-denial for reaching the blessedness of God's kingdom and the unending need for God's help (RCIA, 90). The exorcism in the liturgy are the ones *following the intercessions*.

The blessing of the catechumens is done after the prayer of exorcism. The blessings are given by the priest or Deacon due to their ministry but in their absence a Catechist can do so. These blessings are the signs of God's love and Church's care to the catechumens though they do not yet receive the sacraments. They receive the courage, joy and peace in their journey from the Church (RCIA, 95). The blessings are normally given at the end of the celebration of the word so the are to be dismissed before the prayer of the faithful and preparation of the gifts.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid; 132.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas H. Morris, The RCIA Transforming the Church; A Resource for Pastoral Implementation, 1989, 95.

### 2.2.2.1. The Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names

This is the second step in the liturgical Christian initiation. This is the Rite which closes the period of catechumenate and at the same time marks the beginning of an intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The election celebrates the transition in the life of the catechumens from one who is seeking to one who is ready to stand firm in the commitment (while remaining a seeker).<sup>9</sup> This special period coincides with the opening of Lent so the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity. (RCIA 105) The rite is called election because of the acceptance made by the church is founded on the election by God in whose name the Church acts. It is also called the enrollment of names because as a pledge of fidelity the candidates inscribe their names in the Book that lists those who have been chosen for Christian Initiation. This Book is an enduring sign of the catechumens' commitment.

The rite of Election is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent during the main eucharistic celebration. The readings are those of the first Sunday of Lent, Cycle A. The whole celebration is meant to encourage the catechumens in their journey towards the sacraments of initiation and after. Like Jesus they are to expect temptations and sufferings but because of the grace of God they will be victorious.

After the homily, the catechumens are presented by the catechist to the priest or Deacon. They come forward together with their godparents, one by one after being called by name. The celebrant addresses the faithful and then addresses the godparents who have committed themselves to accompany the catechumens in their journey. The catechumens are asked whether they wish to enter into the life of the church through the sacraments of initiation. The act of admission follows whereby the celebrant declares the catechumens one by one to be members of the Elect and to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter vigil, (RCIA, 120). The intercessions for the Elect follow, with the prayer over the Elect by the celebrant who stretches his hands over them. Then the elect may or may not be dismissed depending on the policy of diocese so as to continue with the liturgy of the Eucharist.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>10</sup> The dismissal is so common among the Abagisu culture especially when there is a meal or a drinking party the un-initiated males are not allowed to share that meal or a drink with the already initiated males.

### ***2.2.3. Period of Purification and Enlightenment***

This period which coincides with Lent, is marked by a more intensive preparation of heart and spirit. This involves spiritual recollection more than catechesis. At this stage the church makes the election by God in whose name the church acts. This is a time for conversion of mind and morals, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching and a sense of faith and charity. The preparation of heart and spirit is accomplished in various rites, especially through scrutinies, presentations and the preparation rites.

This is the period when the elect focus "even more intensely on the meaning of salvation Christ offers, for, to the extent that they see their need for a saviour", <sup>11</sup> they will be able to receive his salvation. The elect in undergoing their process of transformation become symbols of the on-going transformation for those already baptized.

The agents at this time are: local clergy, catechists, sponsors and god parents. These are the people that the catechumens have attained by grace in their conversion of mind and life, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching, and a becoming sense of faith and charity, they may be elected by the local church to enter proximate preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The community as an agent re-examines itself on what still stands in the way of living for the kingdom of God and thus needs to be cleansed. The community sets examples to be followed by the elect.

This period is marked by the celebration of the scrutinies, which take place on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent using the Readings of Cycle A. The elect are publicly scrutinized on their intentions and exorcized. The scrutinies are celebrations of healing and strengthening of the elect so that they follow the true way of life, the true path to holiness, the radical kingdom of God to which we are called. The rites of scrutinies are for self - searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ who is the way the truth and life, (R C I A 128).

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<sup>11</sup> Pamela E.J. Jackson, *Journey bread for the Shadow-lands; The Reading for the Rites of the Catechumenate RCIA*, 1993, 66.

The three scrutinies have the same structure which consists of five parts;

- A. Proclamation of the word of God - Homily
- B. Period of silent prayer
- C. Intercession for the elect
- D. Prayer of Exorcism
- E. Dismissal of the elect

Three scrutinies are celebrated because of inspiring the elect a desire for purification and redemption by Christ. These rites we celebrated either during the eucharistic celebration or in the liturgy of the word.

The rites of the scrutinies have their starting point in the word of God, especially in the Gospel of each scrutiny. The first and the second readings of each scrutiny are in function of the Gospel. The Gospel is at the centre of the Sunday liturgy and of the rites of scrutinies: these Gospel, of the Samaritan Woman, the Man Born Blind and Lazarus are the "ancient" texts used for the preparation of the Elect for Christian Initiation.

After the homily, the elect and their godparents come in front of the presider who first invites the faithful to pray in silence for the elect, asking for the spirit of repentance, a seeker of sin, and the true freedom of God's children,(RCIA 139). He then invites the elect themselves to pray silently suggesting that as a sign of their inner spirit of repentance they bow their heads or kneel, (RCIA 139). The community and the elect pray for some time in silence, all the others stand for the intercessions for the elect. During the intercessions the godparents place their right hands on the shoulder of the one they are sponsoring while the celebrant stretching his hands over them, but this kind of invocation may be adapted according to various circumstances. It is advisable to add at the end of these invocations the general intercessions in case the elect are to be dismissed (RCIA 140).

After the intercessions the rite continues with the exorcism. This is the prayer which constitutes the most important element of the scrutiny. Its first part of it is addressed to the Father and the second part to the Lord Jesus; between the two parts the presider imposes his hands on each of the Elect. This is a sign of purifying and strengthening the work of the Holy Spirit.

The prayer of exorcism, the first part of it is addressed to God the Father, it starts with the memorial of what the Father has done for us through his Son Jesus Christ. This memorial brings out some aspects of the Gospel for instance the woman of Samaritan woman, the man born blind or Lazarus into the prayer of the elect. Then the Father is asked to protect them from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil. In this first part also God the Father is asked to strengthen the Elect in their spiritual journey that they may their hearts to receive the gift of the saviour.

The second part of the prayer is addressed to Lord Jesus. Its starting point in the Gospel assigned to each scrutiny and presents Jesus as the 'fountain of living water' (first scrutiny RCIA, 141), 'Light' (second scrutiny RCIA, 155), 'resurrection and life' (third scrutiny RCIA, 162). Again in the second part of the prayer Jesus is asked to liberate the Elect from the power of evil that surrounds them and also to strengthen them with the living water, light and life (according to the scrutiny being celebrated ) through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In case the Eucharist is to be celebrated, the Elect are normally dismissed (RCIA,142) in a friendly manner before the liturgy of the Eucharist but for pastoral reasons they can remain and are informed that even if they are present for the celebration of the Eucharist they cannot take part in it the baptized ones do (RCIA 67)

In the liturgy of the Eucharist the community prays again for the Elect and their godparents. In case the scrutiny has been celebrated outside the Mass, an appropriate hymn may be added and the Elect and faithful are dismissed together (RCIA, 142). The last rites of this period are the recitation of the Creed (180--186) the *choosing of a Baptismal name (187--197). They are celebrated on the Holy Saturday* as a preparation for the Initiation rite. In the recitation of the Creed, The Elect are prepared for the profession of faith that they will make immediately before they are baptized. The rite also instructs the Elect in their duty to proclaim the message of the Gospel (RCIA 180). The choosing of the name is normally done by the Elect but is advisable to choose traditional Christian names namely those from Uganda is better to choose from the names of their martyrs. The choosing of names is a reminder of the new life that the Elect are going to begin after initiation and of union with community members who have gone before us.

### 2.2.3.1. Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

The final step of the Elect is the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

"Through this final step, the Elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God" (RCIA, 198).

This is the time in which the Elect die and rise in Christ as the Church celebrates His passage from death to life long ago and also the Elect are incorporated into the Church that lives and propagates his life.<sup>12</sup> The Elect receives the adoption of sons and daughters of God and are lead by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time and in Eucharist sacrifice and meal, to the banquet of the kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

The structure of the celebration has four parts namely;

1. Service of light
2. Liturgy of the Word
3. Liturgy of Baptism and Confirmation
4. Liturgy of the Eucharist

The liturgy of the light and the Proclamation of the Word of God prepare both *the Assembly and the Elect for the Sacrament of Initiation.*

#### 2.2.3.1.1. Celebration of Baptism (RCIA, 211)

It begins after the homily at the baptismal font. It is in this rite the efficacy and the actuality of the living Word reach their maximum degree of realization when the

<sup>12</sup> Bouyer, Louis, The Fourth Gospel, 1964, 132.

<sup>13</sup> From the first to final scrutiny there should be a progress in the recognition of sin and the desire for salvation.

faithful turn their attention towards the baptismal font. A Deacon or any minister calls the candidates forward and their godparents present them. They all take their place around the font in such a way as not to block the view of the congregation. The going of the Elect to the font symbolizes that the risen Christ is the one who leads them to where they are to die and to rise to new life in Him who is the conqueror of death. The gathering around the font serves as a symbol of the church becoming the reality.

The invitation prayer follows. The faithful are invited to pray for the Elect to God to grant them light and strength to follow Christ with resolute hearts and to profess the faith of the Church (RCIA, 213).

The Litany of the Saints follows which is the prayer for the Elect by all the members of the Church both the living and the dead, is sung to signify their support and company. After the Litany the celebrant blesses the water. This is one of the most important rituals within the liturgy of Baptism. The prayer of the blessing virtually proclaims the series of wonderful deeds that reveal those aspects of the Christ mystery that Baptism celebrates. The ceremony continues with the profession of faith, which includes the renunciation of sin and the profession itself ( RCIA, 216). The Elect profess the faith that they are going to live. They renounce Satan, his works and his empty promises. During renunciation of the sin, the celebrant questions all the Elect together about the rejection of Satan, the glamour of evil, prince of darkness and works of Satan. The response from the Elect after each question is "I DO", (RCIA.217). The same response is used during the profession of faith, when they are asked whether they do believe in God the Father, Jesus the Lord and Holy Spirit.

The celebrant baptizes each Elect either by immersion or by the pouring of water on their forehead, thus when the Elect have professed in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit invoked by the celebrant, the divine persons act so that they have received divine adoption and become members of the people of God. The washing is the sacrament being joined to Christ. While baptizing the godparents touch the Elect on their shoulders to symbolize the continuous support in the Christian life that calls for ongoing conversion. The white garments or a colour that conforms to local custom are presented to the newly baptized ones by their godparents. The garments symbolize a new creation that they have become and to be clothed in Christ who is to give them the everlasting life. The lighted candles are presented to them by their godparents as a

light of Christ (RCIA,224) The burning candle symbolizes the light of faith that does not destroy any of God's creation but only reveals it in the light of faith.

### 2.2.3.1.2. Celebration of the Confirmation (RCIA, 225-230)

It may be done at the Baptismal font where the celebration of baptism has been. The combination of the two sacraments "signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized" (RCIA,208) The rite of Confirmation has three parts namely :

- a. Invitation
- b. Laying on of Hands
- c. Anointing with Chrism

The newly baptized have been born again they are members of Christ and of his priestly people. To be confirmed they are to share in the out pouring of the Holy Spirit, the spirit sent by Lord upon his Apostles at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is to strengthen them in their suffering, death and resurrection like Jesus. The Priest pray to God to pour out the Holy Spirit on the newly baptized to strengthen them with his gifts and anoint them to be more like Christ, the Son of God (RCIA, 227). Laying on of hands, the celebrant out stretches the hands over the newly baptized while praying in silence. It symbolizes the out pouring of the Holy Spirit on to the Neophytes so that they may live their Christian lives faithfully.

Anointing with Chrism, on the forehead is the sealing of what God has already given to the Neophytes. Neophytes are those who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. They are to participate as from that time in the celebration of the Eucharist. They are also invited to participate actively say intercessions, taking the gifts to the Altar. The Eucharist is a sacrament of unity. It is a unitive symbol in which the baptized assemble and share the one cup the one bread. The Lord's (our Father) recited during the Eucharistic celebration reminds the community members of their common spiritual family for they together address God as "Father" (Luke 11:1-4).

Baptism is a door to life and to the Kingdom of God, it is the first sacrament of the New Law, which Christ offered to all, that they might have eternal life. It is a sacrament of that faith by which the candidates and the faithful are enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit and respond to the Gospel of Christ. It is a sacrament by which its recipients are incorporated into the Church and are built up together in the Spirit into the house where God lives into a holy nation and a royal priesthood. At the same time it is a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it.

Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. It is the matter of sacrament variously as Chrism, the imposition of the hands and prayers over the Elect. It is the second sacrament of initiation. It is normally called Anointing or Chrism. It is in this sacrament that God gives to the Elect the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Eucharist is a Jewish form of liturgical blessing that Jesus used at the last supper. It refers to the characteristic prayer-pattern used by the Jews before eating or drinking anything in which they blessed or thanked God, remembering, confessing and proclaiming what He had done to His people. This is the Old Testament origin in praise of God that comes spontaneously to the lips of one for whom the Lord had performed. It is generally agreed by the New Testament scholars that the earliest Christian Eucharists were in fact complete meals shared together by the local Christian community.

#### ***2.2.4. Period of Mystagogy or Postbaptismal Catechesis***

***(RCIA, 234-241)***

This is the final period, it is not only for the neophytes but also for the community. They grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing the work of the charity. This is the time when the neophytes experience and put into practice what they have been learning and sharing with others during their time of Catechumenate. Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of the postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of

the sacraments of the community, its main setting is the so called Masses for the neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses during Easter season.

As new participants in the sacraments they understand the scripture so as to increase their faith. They have a full joy in the community of the faithful. The ministers in this case are the community members who are adults in faith. They actively introduce and integrate the neophytes into the life of discipleship in the community. If time allows the neophytes can continue to meet with their godparents and the community to uncover and explore the richness of the initiation commitment, as well as to begin to integrate themselves in the Parish and in their respective Small Christian Communities.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This kind of initiation is not so famous, very few Priests practice it in their Parishes. It is my question whether it is neglected, because of lack of time or because they are not well informed about it. As we said in the first chapter, during the initiation among the Abagisu, so long as someone has been initiated in his culture is free to participate actively in some ceremonies that happens in the tribe or in the clan. At the some time after Christian Initiation, the neophytes are free to participate actively in the Church's affairs. They are responsible people in the Church community and in the society in which they live.

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<sup>14</sup> Mark G. Boyer, Mystagogy, Liturgical Paschal, Spirituality for Lent and Easter, 1990, 3-5.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL REFLECTIONS ON THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

In this chapter we would like to give the Theological reflections on the Sacraments of Initiation as well as the procedures used in instructions of the Catechumens among the Abagisu. We will then give some suggestions to the Church leaders and to the Elders of the tribe in order to be more faithful to the Christian Initiation to Adults within their culture.

#### 3.1. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

When one talks theologically about Sacraments of Initiation he brings everything he knows about God and his plan for the universe. Currently, there is a theology of sacraments which has a great merit of situating itself within a deep analysis of the mystery of God and His relationship with the entire creation and its history. It uses a Trinitarian Christology that is at the same time deeply sensitive to the humanness of Jesus. *It employs the ecclesiology which sees the community of believers as gathered together by the grace of Christ and the spirit.* Among the Sacraments of Initiation, the Eucharist is the fullest expression of the Sacramentality of the Church, as a festive taking of food it is from the human point of view that is the ultimate ritual celebration of life. The ultimate ritual celebration of the Eucharist, where-by Christ is in the midst of the community of those gathered in his name under those to whom He has entrusted the apostolic ministry, in the word about him which is read from beginning to the end. Comprehensively preached and in the Spirit who gathers all who share the one bread and wine into one body of Christ. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walsh, Lian, The Sacraments of Initiation, 1988, 5.

No way that a person can participate fully in the sacrament of Eucharist before receiving the sacrament of Baptism.<sup>2</sup> To be in the Church one has to leave the world of sin and escape from the power of devil. It is the Church which ritualize the original Baptism, people get their existence, identity and inaugurates their membership in the Church. The Eucharist is a rite of continual nourishment, growth and consummation of life. It brings together the community in which life is fostered. The liturgical and doctrinal tradition sees the Eucharist as completing process of Christian initiation begin in Baptism.

In the process of Christian Initiation, there is another rite besides Baptism and Eucharist, that is Confirmation. This Sacrament ritualizes some aspects of the sacramentality of the Church in relation to Christ and His role in sacramentalizing the gifts of God. "The proclamation of the word of God with the rite and theological tradition about it linked the rite of Confirmation to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit".<sup>3</sup> The Church is a community of Christians who continue the work of the Lord in the world until the end of time. Those initiated into the Church receive responsibilities in the Church and are called to be mature people in life and behaviour that corresponds to the mature age of salvation that was inaugurated at Pentecost and to the deep maturity given to the Church.

Baptism has always been involved discernment and discrimination according to the demands of a Gospel which perceives life in Christ as the result one's having first entered fully into his passion and death.

*" The texts and rites of the whole reformed initiatory policy issued since the second Vatican Council, together with their basic setting in the stored paschal from the first Sunday of Lent through the Easter Vigil and on the Pentecost Sunday, must be factored into the process by which a theological nauncing of the conventionally Augustinian accents on original sin...".<sup>4</sup>*

In the Christian Initiation of Adults, the relation of Confirmation to Baptism signifies the unity of the Paschal Mystery. It is the close relationship between the

<sup>2</sup> It is also emphasized in the Abagisu tradition that uninitiated male person is not to take part in any traditional ceremony of that tribe. Those who are to act in all the ceremonies are the male initiated people. But females have such no problem.

<sup>3</sup> Walsh Lian, *The Sacraments of Initiation*, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Aidar Kavanagh, *The shape of Baptism...* 1978, 196

mission of the Son and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the joint celebration of the Sacraments by which the Son and the Spirit come with the Father upon those who are baptized. The Theological interpretation of Baptism is to belong to Jesus, to be his property. To recognize Him as a master, Lord or saving Judge. In Matthew 28:19, outside His name (Jesus) there is no salvation up to the sharing fate of Master.

Paul's theology of Baptism as relation and re-enactment of Christ as clothing the Son through whom we are becoming the sons. Baptism is a new mark of salvation that is circumcision in Christ, doing away with all evils. What happened with Jesus once for all is now happening to his brothers and sisters in sacramental participation in his full fate that is identification with first born among many brothers. Baptism is perceived as dying with, rising with Jesus. The liberator from death. The sacramental initiation gives entry into new kingship relation.

The paschal mystery includes Pentecost as the outpouring of the fruit of resurrection not so much different from the acts in history. But as explications of the one divine salvific action creating community of believers as the living resurrection body of the crucified.

According to Pope Paul VI, Baptism and confirmation make a person a Christian personality who transforms all dimensions of private and public life with mind of Christ. A person receives equipment for specific task that is charism which is God given profit. The vocation in the society in which that particular person leaves.

The Eucharist is a climax of sacramental life. It is the centre of liturgical life which brings into view the fullest expression of what a Church is. The Church is the assembly of God's people. Eucharist is the Easter banquet in which Christ is consumed by the neophytes and the faithful to be filled with grace pledge of future glory.

## 3.2. PASTORAL REFLECTION

### 3.2.1. *Procedures used in the Instruction of the Catechumens in Parishes of Tororo Diocese*

In Tororo Diocese the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is not followed. The Abagisu people are still strong in believing in their culture. Those who are Catholics are;

- the one who are educated
- those who migrated and went outside of the area
- some because of inter-marriages

Those who attend classes of Catechesis are the school children and very few grown-up people. They are usually at the range of 12--17 years of age. Some Catechists whom we approached used the book called **Katikisimu yA'bakulu** (Catechism for Adults) some use it as from the first page up to the last page with the Bible as a reference book. We met one who is using his own experience while teaching catechesis. Actually the main characteristic of the catechism is to focus on the basic aspects of the Christian faith namely; Fall, Redemption, Church without insisting too much on particular details. There are two methods used in catechizing ;

- Remote Preparation
- Immediate Preparation

#### 3.2.1.1. Remote Preparation

It comprehends recruiting and pre-catechumenate.

Recruiting does not exclude at all or rule out the role played by the Christians involving the free choice of the individual concerned. This recruiting is the one to be called the period of Evangelization.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Jacob Wabulo, a catechist in Parish, 29th December 1995.

Precatechumenate period, this is a time mainly to teach as many things as possible by heart. Things like the morning prayers, evening prayers, Rosary (Mysteries), songs and many other prayers. There is no explanation thinking that things like prayers are self-explanatory.

Examination for the admittance into the catechumenate, this is a good criteria for the acceptance as the candidates use their knowledge to learn the prayers by heart. It is a kind of proof that they have been taught by their Catechists. The examinations are always conducted by the Parish Priest.

### 3.2.1.2. Immediate Preparation

It is the catechumenate which takes place in the Parish. It is done so because of the basic facts of Christian faith are presented systematically leading up to the administration of the Sacraments by the Priests. All the candidates in various outstations rather sub-parishes come to the Parish to attend lessons.<sup>6</sup>

The Parish Priest takes responsibilities to invite the Bishop at anytime to give the Sacraments of Initiation to the candidates. This is done at any time not during Easter time due to the fact that the Diocese is big. There is no delegation in the Diocese that the Bishop can delegate a Priest to preside over the celebrations. It is difficult to arrange for mystagogy after receiving the sacraments because of the realities of the people and most of the catechists are not qualified for the work. The faithful are not involved apart from the godparents, Catechists and some of the parents of the candidates.

Pastorally I consider the approach of the Catholic leaders and their way of catechizing to be fruitful because had they not done anything like that no body would be initiated in the Catholic church. Through schools the approach is easier because the children and the youth are ready to be evangelized but the elders are still insisting that the traditional religion is the best. The elders believe that their gods can do whatever is needed let it be rain and they have no sense of going to other gods or God. Considering the question which was raised by Pope VI about evangelization in Africa: "Does the church in Africa retain a certain Christian religious form that was brought

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Achilleus Mutenyoo, a Parish priest of Senda Parish, 29 Dec. 1995. He said that he allocates a time table whereby at a mass is included twice per week for the candidates. In the homily he talks about the sacraments which they are to receive, their importance and responsibility that they are to take immediately they receive those initiation sacraments

in from outside and which makes her a stranger and pilgrim among her people? ".<sup>7</sup> This question applies also to the catechumanate in Tororo Diocese. For sure, the sacraments of initiation are still seen as individual affairs not only in Tororo Diocese but also in other parishes.<sup>8</sup> This way of initiation is contradictory to the customs of the church even to that of Abagisu, for them there are a lot of witnesses who come during the initiation ceremony

### **3.3. MY SUGGESTIONS TO THE CHURCH LEADERS AND TRIBAL LEADERS AS FAR AS BOTH INITIATIONS ARE CONCERNED**

Much effort is to be done particularly by the priests and catechists in order to give values to local traditions and customs. As far as the catechumanate is concerned, the catechesis should take the way of the life of the people, their traditions and customs ( Gimisambwa) as a starting point. The catechism classes will build up from there. The tribal elders concerned should be made aware of the candidates aspiring to be initiated in the Church not only the elders but also the communities should be informed of the significance of the changes which are taking place. This is an advantage to the candidate because he may learn some new practices of piety which in many cases, he will be able to fulfil in his or her daily life. He has to have morning and evening prayers daily, go for mass on Sundays of any other day which is appropriate to him/her. That way he/she can be a model to the unbaptized who do not understand the values of being a Christian. If the new baptized person does not put into practice what he/she has received, there is a danger that he/she might easily slip back into paganism due to the influences of the society and elders who force them to follow the traditional customs. This might happen when someone has not yet been baptized.

<sup>7</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelization in Africa Today*, 26th September 74 1975, Vol. XXI No. 5 1976, 294.

<sup>8</sup> It is the same thing done here in the Basilica Cathedral Parish (Nairobi). Last Sept. we were told to prepare the adults and some children whom we were instructing in catechesis for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. All were baptized, then three later weeks all the adults were confirmed without going into the stages of scrutinies and so on.

The catechumanate should be more society oriented. This is for the priests to have dialogues with the elders of the clans to inform them about the catholic initiation. In the long run they may see the communal values which are in both kinds of initiation. I do not see why the priests should not attend the traditional initiation because their presence to such ceremonies contribute a lot in bringing people to the church saying that if a priest come for the cerebration why don't we go to attend the celebrations in the church.

I see that among the Abagisu, the traditional initiation rite is communal, belonging to the society or to the clan. One who has been initiated gets all the powers within the clan; eating with elders, drinking with elders and he can even initiate others so long as he belongs to group of initiator. Each one especially the initiated ones has a role to play during the initiation of some other members. The catechumanate and Baptism are on the contrary, seen and experienced as an individual affairs. An important celebration in the church like baptism should be done in the presence of the whole community and even if the relatives of the newly initiated are pagans, they should be encouraged to participate. "The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful (RCIA 4). This is an aspect typically Christian because it is within the community that the experience of the risen Lord takes place, typically African because in the African understanding each person is one with his or her clan and tribe

The catechumenate should be more adapted to local understanding (inculturation). The Ahagisu consider their traditional initiation to be a very big event. It is more important than a wedding feast. Initiation is made up of actions that is slaughtering animals and birds. It is also made up of rites, words, prayers and experiences. If we wish to transmit the Christian message to the Abagisu people we have to use their pattern of meanings, values perceptions, ideas, and actions. For sure traditional religious rites are not necessarily in opposition to Christianity provided they are dissociated from their pagan context and they have already been given place in different Christian churches. The catechumenate is made up of different experiences namely periods and steps to be followed before and after initiation. The steps to be followed before and after initiation. The steps in the catholic initiation are to be explained in conjunction to the traditional steps. For people to be aware that

when they are initiated in the church they are to neglect their traditional affairs, moreover some traditional elements are good for a true expression of Christian faith.

### **3.4. CONCLUSION**

The work of evangelization was started by the Mill Hill Missionaries and when they advanced in age they gave the task to the local clergy. Most of the local clergy were trained abroad and others in another part of Uganda where their customs are not known and practiced. To go back in their local areas they seem to be new people who do not know anything as far as their culture is concerned. They have adopted their customs again and the main work is to evangelize using two aspects right at the beginning namely: dialogue with the elders to make them aware of the situation, "integration" of the two initiations that is traditional initiation and Christian initiation. The respect of the local clergy to the traditional customs and to the elders is there though not enough. If the elders recognize it even they will be initiated in the church as in other places like in the Baganda tribe. My hope remains that as some of the youth have been initiated in the catholic church may those be a model and encourage others even elders to follow their examples for the greater glory of God and the establishment of His kingdom among the Abagisu and on the entire earth.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Coming to the conclusion of this work, in the first chapter we started by the traditional initiation among the Abagisu tribe. This is the subject of this work. In the second chapter we explained the Christian Initiation to Adults. Considering the traditional rite of initiation among the Abagisu, there is a lot to be done to those people in order for them to be faithful to the tradition of the Church. On the side of catechizing, we wish to indicate that there is still need to bring the catechesis more in line with the life of the people. In the final chapter we have given the theological reflection, observations and suggestions in the Tororo Diocese as far as Christian Initiation of Adults is concerned.

In this conclusion we would like to expose in a more systematical way the theological and liturgical foundations of the spiritual journey of the adult catechumens. This catechumenal journey is fundamentally between God and man. Its objective is to reach communion with the Holy Spirit which constitutes the significance and end of man's becoming, namely, the deification. The catechumenal journey is meant to provide Christians an ecclesial context in which the becoming is to take place. The church as a corporate presence of the body of Christ represented by the faithful gathered. The community acts like a mother, takes care of the catechumens with the nourishment of the Word and the Celebrations. <sup>1</sup> Through their journey, the catechumens enter into an on-going process of conversion and faith with which they join into the pilgriming church towards the final fulfilment. " *The growing faith in the catechumenal journey is, in some way, linked to a spiritual stair-case that goes upwards to the unfathomable mystery*". <sup>2</sup>

The destiny of the catechumenal journey is precisely the entrance into the communion of Trinity and thus, to have a special relation with each of the Divine Persons ( Father, Son, Holy Spirit). With respect of the Father, the catechumens strive to become the sons and daughters of the Father, especially through the second birth in

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<sup>1</sup> There is a care which is given to Umusinde before the before the initiation among the Abagisu. This care is carried out by the community especially those who are already been initiated in the culture.

<sup>2</sup> Savio Hon Tai-Fai, On the Journey of Faith in RCIA, 205.

the sacraments and thus require a new meaning of the pattern that is from the Father to Father. The catechumens are to give thanks to the Father in all circumstances (1Th. 5:8) because He is merciful Father. During the catechumenal journey, the following of Christ is only a moral imitation, but the sacraments we re-live ontologically the earthly history of the Incarnated Son, especially the Paschal event. For the entire period of catechumanate, the Holy Spirit is present at work to open their hearts. We have shown that the entire catechumenal journey is a synergy with the Holy Spirit. Now by the sacraments, their hearts become the dwelling place of the life giving spirit, because they are ontologically united to the body of Christ. Before the Holy Spirit has guided them to search for "the way, the truth and the life".<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit enlightens the catechumens to respond to the Gospel of Christ. There is pattern from moral level (catechumanate) to the ontological level (sacraments) and from the ontological to moral (the Christian becoming) in the daily life. The Christian initiation leads to a continuity of love and joy. And the Lord says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Also St. Paul enlisted the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the first is love the second is joy, (Gal. 5:22).

As far as ecclesial dimension is concerned, the structure of growth of faith in the catechumanate is from faith to faith. The Christian initiation is to take place step by step in the midst of the community of the faithful. The church with respect to the catechumens appears as evangelizing church, who proclaims the good news as a praying church. The catechumens are belonging to the household of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

As the catechumens hear the Word, celebrate the Word and live the Word so as to become the Word, so when they become Christians they should also continue their life from Word to Word. If in the Christian initiation there are moments of getting familiar with the Christian living, then the same things are to repeat themselves even after the sacraments.

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<sup>3</sup> Christ is the way that leads to the life-source, the Father, but at the same time the march on this way is the beginning of the eternal life and the self-unfolding of the truth itself that initiates a gradual fulfilment of all the spiritual expectations of the journeyers. A catechumen is the one who searches a way with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to note that at the end of the election rite the celebrant dismisses the elect with these words "My dear elect, ... Christ will be your way, your truth, and your life... walk always in his peace" (RCIA 123, part A)

<sup>4</sup> RICA 18, if a person dies when he/she is a catechumanate he/she is to be buried as a Christian.

Since man and woman were created in the likeness and image of God, so in the catechumenal journey he/she should be helped to discover this image and try to realize it. As the most important moment of initiation taking place on the Easter Vigil, it involves so many things to help the elect to step into the mystery of Christ who transforms the fundamental significance of these cosmical realities; water for rebirth, oil for strength, wax for enlightenment, incense for prayers, bread for life-giving and wine for spiritual drink.<sup>5</sup>

By the sacraments of initiation a person can join definitely into the match but "it does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2). All the explanatory rites the baptism remind the neophytes of this. The Eucharist sacrifice of Christ is connected with the Easter sacraments, towards the consumation of the eternal life. In otherwards, Eucharist for the catechumens is the point of arrival and also the point of departure. The entire catechetical journey is fundamentally a liturgical sacramental experience. We saw the sacramentality of each stage in various rites. The "Synergy" between Divine Grace and Human freedom is celebrated in liturgical sense of the word. The prayers for blessing water and oil, (RCIA,215,193, respectively ), tell us exactly how God has prepared these signs (water and olive oil).

The catechumens strive to come to the true life giving way with a long spiritual preparation. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they hear the Word of God proclaimed by the Church community and thus begin the journey of becoming Christians. Official stepping into Christ's History is a series of liturgical sacramental events in the form of progression which has its climax in Easter Vigil.

Now the newly initiated people are given responsibilities in the church, they are to participate fully in the church as the other faithful. The same thing applies to the new-initiated person in the Abagisu culture: by inculturating the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the people of Abagisu culture will be able to live this wonderful experience of initiation and be African Christians.

<sup>5</sup> Savio Hon, On the Journey of Faith in RCIA, 211

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## List of Informants

-----, one of the circumcisers, in the outskirts of Mbale Town, interviewed on 4th July 1995.

Fr. Mutenyo Achilleus, a Parish Priest of Senda Parish, interviewed on 29th December 1995.

Master Wadada Godfrey, a candidate for 1996 in Mbale Town, interviewed on 4th July 1995.

Mr. Mabinda Jacob, an elder in Wagudu Village, interviewed on 16th July 1995.

Mr. Mutugomba Fred, a Christian Living in Mbale Town, interviewed on 26th June 1995.

Mr. Nabubolo, a newly circumcised person, interviewed on 10th July 1995.

Mr. Wabulo, a Catechist in the Parish of Senda, interviewed, on 29th December 1995.

Mr. Wangalwa Christopher, an elder whose seven sons are already circumcised, Tororo District, interviewed on 27th June 1995.

Mr. Wayeya Kidudu, an elder in Mbale Town ( Uganda ), interviewed on 26th June 1995.